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THE NESTOR OF HUNGARIAN LETTERS.

Any sincere self-revelation of a man in his older years is worthy the reading. There is a rich coloring borrowed from the mellow ripeness of his mature vision; the asperities of time seem to become softened, and memories cluster with a holier nimbus surrounding them.

Particularly are the records of such a life interesting, when it has formed a directing thread in the complexity of that weaving, which we designate a nation's history. Others, and they are no less, but even more, interesting, far from telling of outward stir and the confused bustle of action, convey deeper lessons of spiritual experience and aspiring effort. If there be still added the grace and charm of literary expression, the rare occasion is attained when the man of letters is writing of that which concerns himself most and which is closest to his thought and heart. It is a happy coalition, indeed, when we find, in anyone, something like a union of all three; and it is just this something of all these impressions combined that we derive from a perusal of Maurus Jókai's autobiographic novel, "*Eyes Like the Sea*."¹

Nor is it an isolated case that fiction serves as a loose-fitting garb for autobiographic details. Dickens and Thackeray both have read much of their own life's experience into their books; and this is especially true of Goethe's "*Wilhelm Meister*." Truth and poetry are frequently indistinguishable nor do we care to separate them strictly in turning the leaves in any relation of spiritual truth. We know that the pages are true — contain the truth of thought and of feeling, if not of detail and of incident. There is the higher poetic truth, the creatively inspiring imaginative truth, which tells us, without the need of any vouchers, that

¹ *Eyes Like the Sea*, a Novel. By Maurus Jókai. Translated from the Hungarian by R. Nisbet Bain. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1894.

all is true, if we may quote Balzac, though in a different sense, in his opening pages to *Le Père Goriot*.

Hungary and Hungarian letters are comparatively little known to us far away Americans ; besides, the Hungarian is almost the one language in Europe that Aryans are in close touch with, and yet which belongs to the Asiatic group. Translations are the best that most of us can hope for, and it is, alas ! too infrequent that a translation of any foreign book is really good, and that the book itself possesses a genuine interest. Let us thank, then, Mr. Nisbet Bain, the translator, for giving us a most readable book in point of style, possessing a brightness and a vivacity which must have caught much of its charm from the rich qualities of the original.

It will probably excite no surprise that we may find the most conflicting statements respecting the author published in our Sunday newspapers, our highly respectable weeklies, and our monthly magazines by would-be-well-informed ones who apparently (as is befitting the modern journalistic spirit) know everything about everybody. In nearly all,—and with a little search, one can find a deluge of material in random columns—there is a delightful contradiction among these self-constituted authorities, and the most heterodox opinions expressed as to almost every question of fact. At length, in the pages of the August *Forum*, the author himself was invited to set at rest many vagaries by frankly fixing some necessary points, and reducing a few dates, from movable feasts, to an appointed calendar. But the fault here again is that there is too much matter of fact ; and the author, in being pilloried before the public gaze and forced to give an account of himself in open court, after our American forensic manner, is so much less entertaining and delightful than in his bit of historic fiction, that we ask no excuse in ignoring this supplementary evidence, and in remanding the case to the lower court, where he may speak for himself and tell just what he pleases and how, in the pages of his own story. We shall not be greatly bothered

about ignorance of details, for no perusal can leave any doubt of truthfulness as to the spirit. It is in the pages of the book before us, crowned in 1890 by the Hungarian Academy as the best book of the year in the Magyar tongue, that we can best read the story of the author's life and the contemporary struggles of the Hungarian nation.

Maurus Jókai is Hungarian above everything, and while near to the councils of his country and loyal to his Emperor and Empress, he is national, but not Austrian in any other sense. Buda-Pest—dear Buda, as their capital on the lower Danube is known—and not the imperial city Vienna, has been his residence and is always his love. That Hungary had produced musicians, we knew already. There was Franz Liszt, a king of the pianoforte and the leader of a school. The Hungarian Rhapsody constitutes a specific musical genus. Joachim, the violinist, in point of birth at least, is Hungarian; as was Reményi. Hungarian dances, Hungarian music, Hungarian orchestras, are a common enough form of advertisement in foreign and in cis-atlantic capitals.

Hungarian letters are less known, and in the person of Jókai we are told that we get acquainted with the best in Hungarian literature. And literature is here taken in no narrow sense; for he has excelled in nearly all its branches—in poetry, history, drama, and the novel, not to speak of years spent in actively inspiring journalistic work. But Jókai is even more than a writer; he is the type of a newly great and aspiring nation. He was one of the patriots of the Revolution of 1848, that gave Hungary position as an integral part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and although now an old man, he is yet a virile figure. He participated in the Kossuth struggles, and has outlived the martyr-patriot. Indeed, his impress on the Hungarian mind has been, in some respects, doubtless, even greater than that of the famous Dictator, for, in the number and continuity and varied character of his works, he has been called the *voice* of Modern Hungary. It is chiefly through his writings, political,

satirical, humorous, historic, poetic, dramatic, and romantic, that the aspirations of the Magyar folk have found expression and thus become promulgated to the world. No achievement, no disaster, no hope, no sorrow, in the life of Hungary since its new birth, that has not been voiced somewhere in his varied production. Thousands who could not read his books, it is claimed, have learned by heart his songs, and have thus come to feel their country's hopes and possibilities. It is not strange, then, that his literary position has been compared to that of Victor Hugo and Dumas *père* in France, and to the place long kept in British hearts and in the development of the English novel by good Sir Walter. And again, like another poet-patriot of another nation, Schiller, Jókai's youth was characterized by storm and stress, and he exposed zealously, and even foolishly, a life for those three words that have often proved the touchstone of both the rarest nobility and the direst madness, Liberty, Fraternity, Equality.

Two years ago, on January 6, 1894, his country celebrated his literary jubilee—the fiftieth anniversary of his first scarcely recognized poetic drama—marking the turn of a half century in his career as peculiarly the national voice of Hungary and the Magyar folk. They hold more account of anniversaries, generally, everywhere in Europe than we do, and a jubilee is particularly sacred. The jubilee of a great writer, a great teacher, a great figure in any sphere, is a splendid occasion. It is his public and professional Golden Wedding, celebrating the life-long union with his mistress, muse, or goddess, as the case may be, *Scientia*, *Politica*, or *Litteræ*.

Some of the circumstances attending Jókai's jubilee were touching in the extreme, and well sufficed to make the old man feel it is enough of life to live. For it was a jubilee of the nation, a celebration of their national greatness, and every class in society, from the throne to the peasant, had some part in it. There were processions and floral emblems, orations and odes, dinners and drinkings;

but the special literary feature was an *édition de luxe* of Jókai's collected works. Something like a hundred dollars a set was the price fixed, and the average Hungarian is not rich, yet the demand reached easily, it is said, a thousand copies. The profits were to go to Jókai himself, and it is estimated that he received \$50,000 as his share, a noble tribute and a splendid gift to the writer, who is by no means wealthy. To subscribe became a matter of national dignity. The list was headed by Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary and Empress of Austria (who is claimed as a life-long friend and admirer of the poet) and by the widow of the late Crown Prince Rudolph. There were numerous Archdukes and Archduchesses (for these are very plentiful in Austria-Hungary) on the list, also ministers of state and quondam dignitaries, among others Cardinal Vaszary and Count Kalnoky. And the blessed school children and the poorer people combined and together made up the requisite sums to receive sets as their joint property. Far more, herein lies the undying and divine voice of the national heart, and the writer's real vindication for future fame. "Illustrious personages pass away and vanish," he is reported as having declared, "but the people never die."

From various sources we glean that he was born in 1825. He himself says, in his story, that he was twenty-four when the Revolution of 1848 broke out. His birth-place was Komorn or Komárom. His father was a lawyer ("advocate" is the common European term for this species) and he was of a good and ancient family, the final "i" in the name having somewhat the same value as *de* in French and *von* in German. The family were strict Calvinists, and it surprises one at first to know of so intense a Calvinistic population in the heart of the natural territory of the Roman Church. These two forms of religious creed and dogma—Calvinist and Romanist—the author is perfectly familiar with and equally tolerant of, in the present volume. For himself he is apparently too national in spirit to be illiberal.

Literary genius usually buds early, especially when

planted and watered, as Jókai's ever fruitful tree has been. His first poem, we are gravely told, was composed at the age of six. It is hardly in the collected works; however, it actually got published somehow, filling a corner, conveniently, of an Hungarian weekly newspaper; and, we believe, some one, in a fit of questionable zeal, has recently fished it out for exposure. His first novel was certainly written at seventeen while at school, and its very title, "Ordeal," indicated the influences the youthful imagination was working under. This was, naturally, not only more mature, but more ambitious, than the poem, and was given a prize by the students and professors of the Lyceum. After essaying lyric poetry and the novel, the next flight of fluttering literary genius, if it thrives in a continental country, is with the drama. This our author attempts in poetic dress, producing the dramatic poem, "The Hebrew Boy," or "The Jew Son," or "The Infant Jew," as one may find it variously referred to in translation. It seems to have been the date of this production, January 6, 1844, (for one must begin somewhere) that was celebrated in the author's jubilee. Since he had won a prize at school, the drama was placed in competition for more worthy laurels, the prize offered by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (for thus they stimulate original production abroad in "effete monarchies") for the best dramatic work of real literary merit. Jókai's effort failed to secure the prize, but he received at least an "honorable mention," and thus stimulated, began the long career in letters which, with all diversions, was to prove his real profession.

These early days — the days of his youth — are told delightfully in reminiscence in the first pages of "Eyes Like the Sea." As a true poet, he was susceptible, of course, to the charms of young women, and it is scarcely necessary to explain that it was one of these who possessed the "Eyes Like the Sea;" nor is it further necessary to say that it is not of the lady he afterwards married that he speaks thus.

The young man enjoyed the very process of living; it

was a pleasure to him, as were all life's little amenities. Fresh, bright glimpses of Hungarian customs and manners are common enough in his pages. We all know of the Hungarian waltzes and the Hungarian dances, even if some of us have not made a failure at one time or another in attempting them. Jókai would have us believe that the good old days were far better than the present. We catch his very enthusiasm!

"Now, the waltzes of those days were very different from the waltzes we dance now. The waltz of to-day is a mere joke; but waltzing then was a serious business. Both partners kept the upper parts of their bodies as far apart as possible, whilst their feet were planted close together. Then the upper parts went moving off to the same time, and the legs were obliged to slide as quickly as they could after the flying bodies. It was a dance worthy of will-o'-the-wisps."

It is in one of these whiskings away that he falls under the spell of the "Eyes Like the Sea." To save his partner from tumbling, he falls on his knees. The rest of the episode can be told only in quotation.

"I split my pantaloons just above the knee. I was annihilated. A greater blow than that can befall no man.

"Bessy laughed at my desperate situation, but the next moment she had compassion upon me.

"'Wait a bit,' said she, 'and I'll sew it up with my darning needle.' . . . In her great haste she pricked me to the very quick with the beneficent but dangerous implement.

"'I didn't prick you, did I?' she asked, looking at me with those large eyes of hers which seemed to speak of such goodness of heart.

"'No,' I said, yet I felt the prick of that needle even then.

"Then we went on dancing. I distinguished myself marvelously. With a needle prick in my knees, and another who knows where, I whirled Bessy three times round the room, so that when I brought her back to the *garde des dames*, it seemed to me as if three and thirty mothers, aunts, and companions were revolving around me."

This is the spirit throughout the book that stirs our blood and makes us live and love with him.

He was pretending to study law meanwhile, and had determined to follow the profession of his father; but it was very evident that he had at this time another mistress far more jealous than either law or the pursuit of letters. Even his dramatic success ranked only second after an opportunity to be dancing with some charmer like this young lady with the wonderful eyes. The incident already related occurred at the dancing school of M. Galifard.

"I am really most grateful to Monsieur Galifard. I have to thank him for the first distinction I ever enjoyed in my life. This was the never-to-be-forgotten circumstance that when my colleagues, the young hopefuls of the Academy of Jurisprudence at Kecskemet, gave a lawyers' ball, they unanimously chose me to be the *elötánczos* (leader). To this day I am proud of that distinction; what must I have been then? On the heels of this honor speedily came a second. The very same year the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, on the occasion of the competition for the Teleki prize, honorably mentioned my tragedy, 'The Jew Boy,' and there were even two competent judges, Vörösmarty and Bajza, (they were the names of two of the best known contemporary Hungarian writers and poets) who considered it worthy of the prize. . . . When, therefore, I returned to my native town, after an absence of three years, I found that a certain *renommée* had preceded me. I had also very good reasons for returning home. The legal curriculum in my time embraced four years. The third year was given to the *patveria* the fourth year to the *jurateria* (terms denoting different branches of the Hungarian law). Every respectable man goes through the *patveria* in his own country, but the *jurateria* at Buda-Pest." From this we see, and indeed from his later journalistic and legislative performances, that it was a very respectable training in legal principles which he must have had, nevertheless.

He tells further of himself with a somewhat charming air of egotism:

“And I had something else to boast of, too. In my leisure hours I painted portraits, miniatures in oil. So well did I hit off the judge of Osziny (and he did not give me a sitting either) that everyone recognized him; but a still greater sensation was caused by my portrait of the Procurator Fiscal, who passed for one of the prettiest women in town.” Of course, this last touch had to be added.

Appreciation of the truest principles of one art lies very close to that of another, and many in our day and of our own tongue have pursued both, not to disadvantage. Had not law and letters and life and love — the four great l's alliterating so allusively to the imagination of the average college-bred young man — so deeply absorbed his attention it seems possible that he might have gained some note, too, as an artist.

The high animal spirits proceed:

“And yet, despite all this, when in the following Shrove-tide, the Lord Lieutenant gave a ball to the county (they were something like Lord Lieutenants in those days), I was *not* called upon to open the ball! Ungrateful Fatherland!” And then comes the passion of still another Hungarian dance: “Ah! that *körmagyar*. That is something like a dance. It requires enthusiasm to dance *that*.”

These pictures of light-hearted youth — and they give a fair example of the easy and allusive style so well adapted for reminiscence — are not without their charm and fascination. The same darning needle played chief rôle in another episode equally dramatic. The “Eyes Like the Sea” had detected a wart on his right hand just below the thumb, and above the artery, which she promised to rid him of.

“It will smart dreadfully. But if a girl can stand it, you can,” she said, and then proceeded to torture him by cal-cining it with the needle red hot. “It is thus that the demons of hell must look upon those whom they are roast-ing! ‘Does it hurt?’ she hissed between her teeth. She appeared to be in a state of ecstatic delight. ‘It hurts, but it is not the needle.’”

It is not often that an author gives glimpses into the privacy of his workshop and shows us, so far as it can be shown, the secret of his art. Jókai is as confiding at times as Thackeray, though with a difference, and makes a friend of his readers, for he has come to know they are his friends and he doesn't mind telling them things in confidence. Incidentally an almost exaggerated wealth in figure and color is disclosed.

"Working and walking at the same time?" the Eyes ask. "'Such is my habit. I work out the whole scene in my head first of all, down to the smallest details, so that when I sit down, it is a mere mechanical a-b-c sort of business.'

"'Then, according to that, when you are marching with rapid strides up and down that long path, you neither hear nor see anything?'

"'Pardon me, I see grass, trees, flowers, birds, stumps of trees, and huts of reeds overgrown with brambles. Amongst all these I weave my thoughts like the meshes of a spider's web. And I hear, too. I hear the piping of the yellow-hammer, the twittering of the titmouse, the notes of the horn from distant ships, the humming of the gnats, and they all have something to whisper to me, something to tell me. A buzzing wasp lends wings to my imagination; but if I meet a human face, the whole thing flies out of my thoughts, and a single 'your humble servant' will dissolve utterly my *fata Morgana*, until I turn back and reconstruct the ends of my spider's web among the freshly-discovered reed-built huts, tree-trunks, and trailing flowers, when the well-known voices of the dwellers in the wilderness bring back to me again my scattered ideas; then I retreat into the little wooden summer-house in our garden, and there, disturbed by nobody, I transfer to paper the images which stand before my mind.' "

It was in this little summer-house that the first romance was written, which he confesses he loved "just as much as a man loves his first-born, though it may be deformed by all

sorts of spiritual and physical defects." Where is the young bird that does not like to feel its wings and soar? and where is the newly-fledged author who does not delight in reading aloud his own creations? Great aspirations were those flaming in the heart of the youth, aspiring to pull down some of the leaves of Apollo's laurels for his own brow. The young mind, in full belief of future entrance upon its kingdom, despises ordinary values. Only images of pure gold flit before the eyes, and the jewels of the imagination are all pearls of great price.

The young man might have remained fascinated and absorbed and made incapable of all serious effort had it not been for an opportune bit of ridicule. The extreme sensitiveness to shame and laughter occupies a prominent place in others of Jókai's works — can it be a special Hungarian mark? It was only by a break with all the attractions of this delightful and alluring provincial society, a break effected by his sweet, gentle, sensible mother, that he resolved within twenty-four hours to take the first boat to Buda-Pest, and was on his way.

Jókai speaks of his mother very feelingly and tenderly — of her love, her care, above all of her wisdom. It was chiefly to her, as we have just said, that this sudden tearing away from the seductive influences of his native town occurred and that he passed out to the capital city and into the great world. It is very often the little things that affect human lives most deeply. It was a small thing for a bit of pride to strive with mocking laughter, but it removed him from the atmosphere of a provincial town and introduced him to the large city which was to be the future theatre of his literary work. His promise and career were no longer to be locked up in a retired corner, but were to become national.

Yet he was not destined to a legal career. He was licensed to practise law, it is true, but he turned at once with unerring instinct to journalism, and has written industriously, in one form or another (probably even too much, some-

times) ever since. This was before his twentieth year, and the jubilee was before his seventieth. How industrious a man can be and how much work one can do in fifty years is seen by his output. "Three hundred and fifty volumes, bound, according to the caprice of the publisher, in a variety of sizes, constitute the first complete edition of my works," he says in his *Forum* article, thus making an average of seven volumes a year, not to count a good deal of more or less journalistic hack-work. And yet he had time, besides, to be a lawyer, nominally, to become editor of numerous papers, to be a parliamentarian, to engage in a Revolution, to be banished, to be condemned to death, and to indulge in a number of similar *passetemps*.

Of Jókai's large number of works (most of which are novelettes and novels, besides a half dozen dramas) comparatively few have been done into English. German is the one western language into which nearly all have been rendered, naturally from the relations of Hungary to the Austrian empire and its capital Vienna; though the author has been honored by translation in part into at least a dozen tongues. The translator of the present volume modestly confesses that he has read only twenty-five out of Jókai's one hundred and fifty novels. Incidentally, it may be said that perhaps the best known in English, apart from the present volume, is "Timar's Two Worlds," recently published by Messrs. Appleton & Co.—a strong story of a double life, of strength and of weakness, of honor and of crime. "In Love with the Czarina" is a collection of short sketches, mainly historical, gotten out by an English house. Finally, the Cassell's Sunshine Series of novels contains several; as, for instance, "There is no Devil;" but these are in such a form that the reader cannot be quite sure as to the accuracy and aptness of the translation, or the extent to which excision has been applied and a heightening of effect introduced for the sake of sheer sensationalism, and to satisfy a flagrantly lurid imagination.

For Jókai is not averse here and there to startling his readers by a picture or an idea or a suggestion ; it is one of his frequent effects. He can expose with a few words some conventionality and tear away, upon occasion, the flimsy covering of propriety, and now and then it takes a strong pair of eyes to stand the bright light without blinking.

It was in Buda-Pest that Jókai had full bent for his literary genius. He was already considered worthy of notice by some of the most prominent Hungarian writers of the time ; he claimed, in fact, an intimacy with more than one. The poet, Alexander Petöfi, author of "*Talpra Magyar*" (To arms! ye men of Hungary) and beloved everywhere in the kingdom as the Hungarian Robert Burns,¹ was a former schoolmate of Jókai's. The two friends fostered kindred sentiments and aspirations, both for the freedom of their native land and for the high purposes of art, and their conversations on these subjects became long and earnest. Petöfi was the older, in the season of his renown, and lent encouragement to Jókai's efforts, giving him what he needed so much, the practical common-sense advice of a man of the world. On one visit, which our author describes, Petöfi took out of his host's hands the manuscript of "*Every-day Days*" (one of Jókai's earlier works which its author was in doubt how to dispose of) turned over the leaves and read the headings of the chapters. "That was an original idea of yours, I must say, to choose mottoes from popular ballads for your chapter headings. I'll take this with me to Pest and get it published," was the friend's final comment. At the same time he counted out twenty-seven silver florins as the price of early attempts he had succeeded in selling for his friend to the publishers. It was Jókai's first literary return, and he tells us that he felt he was a Rothschild. And thus the fateful compact with the muse of letters was subscribed to and sealed.

It was Petöfi's advice, too, that led him to give up competing for the Academy prize for which he had once been

¹ So designated, as well as translated, by Sir John Bowring.

defeated, and to write pieces directly for acceptance by the theatre, and most of all, to get to Buda-Pest as soon as possible. This was the advice he had now followed, and Petöfi's was the society to which he naturally gravitated. His drifting towards journalism was equally inevitable, and in his vain strivings, at first, to get something to do, he admits, jocularly enough now, that he even came perilously near being a critic. From the company he kept in Buda-Pest, and by his natural inclinations, the gifted, impetuous, young man was plunged into politics, and with politics there insinuated themselves gradually dreams of freedom for his beloved country. He had previously been a member of a philanthropic society, indulging in schemes for the amelioration and freedom of those condemned for life to penal servitude. An enthusiastic band of young literary men are most susceptible to just these influences, and can very easily sacrifice themselves on the altars kindled with such fires. It was the year 1848, the age of revolutions, and the flames, breaking out in the streets of Paris, spread themselves in every European state. It was in 1848 that Prussia received the basis of its present constitution. It was in 1848 that Hungary took steps which later led to its recognition as a separate kingdom and an integral part of an empire formed on new lines. Eighteen forty-eight was the real date of the awakening and the recognition of the Hungarian masses.

It was the "storm and stress" period of the youth as he entered into the broad arena of life. How revolutionary and bitter many of his early writings were, and how he has lived to laugh over a good deal that was in them himself! "The paroxysms of a crushed spirit, the dreamy phantoms of a diseased imagination, self-contempt, a moon-sick view of the world in general, characterize all my tales belonging to that period," he declares. It was a time for mental disquiet and distortion, and a period of *weltschmerz* for his youth, as well as for Hungary as a nation, and all his feelings bore this color. The warning voice was not missing, but came to him declaring "the path along which

you are now rushing so impetuously leads straight to the gallows — or else to suicide." In Jókai's case it came near to both; his friend, Alexander Petöfi, the national lyricist, was happy in losing his life on a battlefield for Independence.

It is the vivid picture of the Revolution of 1848 and his own share and experience therein which forms, historically, the most valuable part of the volume "Eyes Like the Sea." The mere facts are that he was at first editor of a notorious weekly newspaper in 1846, and when, in 1848-9, the flames of the Revolution burst forth in their intensity, he was a prominent figure in all. It was he who proclaimed in 1848 "The Twelve Articles of Pest," the Hungarian pronouncement of civil rights and liberty.

It was in the midst of this scene, both animated by a common purpose, that he and the woman of his fate met. Rosa Laborfalvi¹ was the greatest of Hungarian tragediennes, and was present in the crowd and exhibited a like enthusiasm and even madness.

The scene of their meeting is a fine one. The rain was falling and was almost threatening to quench the sparks of revolution in the kindling. The circumstances are given in Jókai's own words:

I noticed that there were not only gentlemen around me, but ladies also. A pair of them had insinuated themselves close to my side. In one of them I recognized "Queen Gertrude" (as the actress was known who excelled in that part). On her head she wore a plumed cap and was wrapped up in a Persian shawl embroidered with palm-tree flowers. Both cap and shawl were dripping with rain. I had met the lady once or twice at the Szigligetis'. I exhorted the ladies to go home; here they would get dripping wet, I said, and some other accident might befall them. "We are no worse off here than you are," was the reply. They were determined to wait till the printed broadsides were ready.

The insurgents next proceeded to the Town Hall, there to ratify the "Articles" and then scatter them abroad. In the evening the whole town was illuminated in honor, and

¹She was not the wife of Jókai's friend, the poet Petöfi, as one of the many biographical sketches loosely states.

a free performance was determined upon at the theatre. Here pandemonium reigned; the performance was too tame a procedure and had to come to a stop; the revolution had begun in earnest; for a moment everything seemed lost.

The author continues:

Then a thought occurred to me. I could get on to the stage from Nyáry's box; I rushed in through the side wings.

I cut a pretty figure I must say. I was splashed up to the knees with mud from scouring the streets all day. I wore huge, dirty, overshoes, my tall hat was drenched, so that I could easily have made a crush hat of it and carried it under my arm.

I looked around me and perceived Egressy. I told him to draw up the curtain, I wanted to harangue the people from the stage.

Then "Queen Gertrude" came towards me. She smiled upon me with truly majestic grace, greeted me, and pressed my hand. No sign of fear was to be seen in her face. She was wearing the tri-colored cockade on her bosom, and, of her own accord, she took it off and pinned it on my breast. Then the curtain was raised.

The bit of ribbon rosette, in the Hungarian colors—red, white, and green—proved the salvation of the hour. To wear the cockade himself, everyone had first to hurry home; the theatre was soon emptied and peace was preserved.

I hastened after Rosa Laborfalvi as soon as this scene was over, and pressed her hand. With that pressure of our hands our engagement began.

In 1849 Jókai joined with the fortunes of the Hungarian government at Debreczlin, began editing another newspaper, and was present at the capitulation of Vilagos on August 29. Death stared him in the face as a rebel. Many of the Hungarian leaders fell on their swords like King Saul and his armor bearer to escape worse than death at the hands of the Philistines; and Jókai, too, had resolved himself upon a like fate. In this hour of need, he was saved both from the enemy and from himself by the woman of his life. His heroic wife, who had shared every anxiety as well as hope, who seemed to use here rôle at the theatre as mere preparation for taking part in more real and living tragedies of the human soul, followed him up and came to him in the hour of despondency, and by her woman's wit and tact and love saved a star to Hungary and to the world. In one

point at least like Milton, his gifts were to unfold still further in time of peace. The wife had shrewdly converted all her jewels and finery into gold, she helped her husband disguise himself, and cheating the hostile government of its prey, in the character of peasants they made their way on foot through the heart of the Russian army, in search of a secure hiding place in the obscure depths of the vast forests. As the author himself portrays it in the pages of his own book, it seems providential.

Jókai was to remain hidden in the deep beech forests while his wife returned to Pest to resume her engagement at the National Theatre. If they could win back Jókai's patrimony, they intended purchasing a little property in the heart of the beeches, close to his father-in-law, and plough and sow the rest of his days. He plaintively asks: "What else could we do? Our country, our nation, our liberty were now no more. Our souls had no wings. We stuck fast in the mire."

Meanwhile, his wife encountered many difficulties at the capital. The National Theatre had fallen into the hands of the opposing element, the Germans. Her husband could only write to her by most indirect methods. From August till the middle of October he remained in the dark forest, his impatient soul knowing absolutely nothing of what was going on in the world around him. Shut in by such scenes and occupied alone by his thoughts, he abandons himself to his inborn love of nature, turns the inner eye of memory back over the past, and gives vent in glowing burning words to his feelings and impressions, as they surge within his breast or pass in review before him. A certain impatience siezes hold upon him, and a spirit of bitterness and intense hatred towards all his surroundings and conditions creeps over him — the existent conditions of his country and its people. "Alas! thou white-antlered hind of our ancient leader Almos, whither hast thou led us? Would that thou hadst left us in Asia! There, at any rate, we would not have been obliged to learn German!"

In the power of description, disclosing the vast depths of forest sketching far into the unknown, and the high boulders piled up in their immensity, and in the feeling for beauty, commingled with the intensity of dramatic interest nowhere let go, the book has rich charms. But these passages must be left to the reader, and it is obviously unfair to deal too liberally with extracts.

Vivid descriptions, however, are even better fitted to revolutionary scenes of burning and pillage and horror than to idyllic landscapes. His native village falls a prey to the flames of war and of rapine. The recital is set forth, adroitly enough, in the words of the woman with the Eyes like the Sea — and all the livid glories of the fatal scene are portrayed, in language hurrying us on tumultuously, and recalling, not a little, the highly colored horror and rapid movement of the brilliant narrative of another Revolution in Carlyle's pages.

These are not the only passages which give full opportunity to his rich descriptive faculty and dramatic talent in story telling. The terrible death of two gypsies, tracked and treed by the wolves of the endless forests, is peculiarly drastic; it is so livid that we close our eyes with a shudder to avoid viewing the tearing of the flesh and the crunching of the bones in our presence.

In the sore hour of need, and almost of despair, outcast and fugitive as he was, he was tempted to turn his back on his country and betake himself to Paris, that home and place of refuge for so many infected with the germs of Revolution. Even should he come out with his life, if he continued to write in Hungary, it could be only under an assumed name; and, indeed, for years his novels and articles following this period were all signed by different *noms de plume*. Still his spirit remained undaunted:

If I live, I will build a tower out of the ruins of my country's glory; if I die, my grave will become an altar. Vainly does this coward flesh of mine tremble in every nerve. I am neither a hero nor a giant. The report of a gun makes me tremble; I grow pale in the presence of death; grief draws

tears from me — but I will not depart from my set path. If I cannot write under my own name, I will write under the name of my landlord's dog. I will be "Sajo" (a name actually employed). We'll bark if we can't speak, but we'll not be silent.

Truly, a noble eloquence arising from a tortured spirit seeking utterance!

But the thought of Paris was very alluring and came back to his fancy again and again, and he could not readily shake it off:

To become a great French writer! To be raised aloft on the shoulders of the most glorious of nations! What here at home was but the crack of a whip in my hands, would there be a thunderbolt!

And he continues:

Ah! what a different man I should have become. Had I fled, I should now be the grand master of the Realists, for there is as much erotic flame, satiric vein, and luxurious fancy in me as in them; but I have not used these qualities because I write for an Hungarian public. Had I flown, millions would have read my works, and fathers and mothers would have cursed me as the corruptor of their children. And I should have laughed at them, and tapped the fat paunch, which as an idealistic writer I have never been able to acquire.

It was by his wife's intervention and by a fiction, as told here, that Jókai was at last enabled to escape and to return to Pest. She succeeded in securing for him a passport; for, when the Komorn garrison capitulated and the officers were guaranteed life and liberty, a friend wrote Jókai's name in the list of capitulating lieutenants, and handed the passport bearing his name to his wife.

His life was at first very quiet and naturally so, since he was still under police supervision. His work was that of the journalist and editor, but only possible under various assumed names. One of these, for a while, was "Kakas Martin" (Martin Cock). "Eh! what a popular man I was then! There were Kakas Martin clays, with bowls in the shape of cock-headed men. I really was in the mouth of the nation in those days. *O tempi passati.*"

When one political sheet would come to grief, immediately another would spring up to take its place. There might be a nominal publicly advertised and responsible edi-

tor, but Jókai was really the mouthpiece and ruling genius. And it was not play besides, not to speak of its dangers, for it was a life of incessant unsparing work, with little rest and recreation. This sort of thing was more than he could stand, and he broke down, siezed with a hemorrhage. This was in the year 1858, and the ill symptoms were only cured by five or six hours' daily exercise in the saddle in a bold expedition of some weeks' duration to the Western Carpathian Alps.

Owing to journalistic indiscretion, our author also was to experience the confinement of a prison. It was the story of Leigh Hunt's imprisonment repeated. His stay indoors was one of the brightest and most restful episodes in his life. He made a cosy home for himself inside the walls, and worked away steadily except when interrupted by the pretty steady flow of visitors. Indeed, he was forced to beg his jailer for *solitary* confinement from them.

He became further and further engrossed in the questions and movements of the day. The cause of letters suffered; he even intimates that his home suffered before this all-demanding goddess, *Politica*.

But we have portrayed enough of the man as drawn in his own pages, and there is no candid expression of a man's past feelings and purposes that has not a peculiar charm, all its own. We have seen him a man of letters, a journalist, a political leader, and later he became a member of Parliament for the National-Liberals; among more recent honors, he is fellow of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Hungary, and President of the Petöfi Society, and has of late been elected an honorary member of the International Literary Congress at a session held in London. Despite his fifty years' service, he is still working, in his desire to complete, while he may yet live, what may prove to be the Hungarian national songs of the Niebelungen. Here we will leave him, still dreaming of his country and seeking to put into expression, as best he may, the essence of the thought and aspiration and character of his native tongue and land.

Perhaps we ought to have spoken more of the wonderful vigor of his work and the inimitable charm and lightness of his narrative — particularly, of the alluring attractiveness of his heroine, Bessy. She is the leading figure in the volume considered as a novel, and it was a happy and genuine artistic touch to tell much of the story in her words. In any other way, our minds would possibly have dwelt more upon the improbabilities of the recital and not so much upon its intense delightfulness. In this, as in other points of narrative style, Jókai actively recalls the charm of our late ill-fated prince of narrators, Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, whose “*New Arabian Nights*” are hardly more fantastic and fascinating than many of Jókai’s fancies. The author’s personality hovers over all. That he writes rapidly, we feel from the glow; that he never blots his own pages is, perhaps, also in evidence — possibly unfortunately so — for he has unquestionably often written unwisely and too much.

And what of Bessy? incomparable, high-spirited Bessy, who had five husbands, and was surely so delightful and irresistible she could have found no difficulty in obtaining as many more, had not the fifth, as in the case of the Wife of Bath (and the fifth one too, in both instances, smacking somewhat of clericalism) proved fatal. A certain resemblance Mr. Bain, the translator, has already found between her and “that other delightful and original rogue in romance,” the lady who becomes Mrs. Desborough in Mr. Stevenson’s “*Dynamiter*.” They both can tell such enchanting and thrilling adventures and apparently, too, love so warmly and devotedly! And someone else — a friend in reading — has suggested what English heroine is there so like Bessy in her fascination, and who wrought such havoc and ended even so miserably, as *Beatrix Esmond*? The lively heroine animates so vividly and intensely the pages of this book, that we almost resent having our picture disarranged and our fancies mentally dissected by the matter of fact information hinted at in the closing chapter, that

the author happened upon her in visiting a house of correction for women trespassers, and there the original stood before him, and thus the tale became told!

We can now better understand how Jókai has been called the Dumas of Hungary. As an exception to all other contemporaneous literatures—French, Italian, and Spanish; German, Hollandish, and Scandinavian; Slavonic, and English and American, too, in their latest developments—the novel of adventure and humor is still popular in Hungary, and rich exuberance of fancy and of language is still permitted. With an historic past close behind its people, the spirit engendered therefrom has fostered their romantic temperament. This spirit is clearest seen in Maurus Jókai. He is virtually the creator of the Hungarian novel, and as has been intimated, has written near a library full. His translator, the biographer and translator, too, of Hans Christian Andersen, thus characterizes him: “He possesses a gorgeous fancy, an all-embracing imagination, and a constructive skill unsurpassed in modern fiction; but his most delightful quality is his humor, a humor of the cheeriest, heartiest sort, without a single *souçon* of ill-nature about it, a quality precious in any age, and doubly so in an overwrought, supercivilized age like our own.”

For ten years after the Revolution Hungarian literature was nearly extinct; all the old forces had become scattered and annihilated. Almost alone Jókai created a new literature. He betook himself to fiction when political journalism failed. Here was the great misfortune from the point of view of literary art. When a man does so much and such varied work, a good deal of it is bound to be inferior. But his wealth, as has been suggested, springs from sheer exuberance, and it is not a mark of exhaustion.

And should we ask, in the end, what are the author's own thoughts as to the spirit which has animated this work, the answer comes clear: It is the re-dedication of self to a life of letters!

And now, too, when I stand before the big silly bookcase, which is filled with nothing but my own works, I often think, would it not have been better if they had none of them been ever thought out? And instead of writing so much for the whole world, would it not have been better if I had written for my own private use, just so much as would go within the inside cover of a family Bible? Nowadays, a whole street in my native town is called after my name: would it not have been better if all I had there were a simple hut?

But no! I willed it so, and if it were possible for me to go back to the diverging cross-roads of my opening life. I would tread once more in the self-same footprints that I have left so long behind me.

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